

# Record

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## IMB commissions 55 new missionaries

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (BP)— One couple sold a farm they had worked hard to acquire. Another sold most of their possessions. Others gave up lucrative careers, including one who was a special assistant to a prominent governor in the South — all to follow the Lord's command to serve overseas and share Jesus Christ with unbelievers.

For others of Southern Baptists' 55 newest career and associate international missionaries, appointed Nov. 17 in the Sacramento, Calif., convention

center, the ways Christ's call changed their lives were equally dramatic.

"I was brought up in a Buddhist family in Korea," said one of the missionaries, who is going to an undisclosed country. "I became a Christian at 40 years of age when the Holy Spirit utilized John 8:32 to convict me."

Said that new missionary's spouse: "I also was reared in a Buddhist family. I became a Christian in 1983 through the witnessing of a friend."

Rob Burns, who speaks with a thick British accent, recounted, "I dreamed of a long career in professional soccer, but after serious injury at age 24, I wondered how God could use me. Ten years ago I left England, answering a call to America, to preach the gospel using soccer as a medium."

"Now, God is calling us to South Wales in Western Europe as an evangelistic resource using sports."

Burns' wife Jenny said: "God is combining my sports background and the wondrous things he has done in my life to reach a nation that once sent pioneer missionaries into a lost world but have now themselves sunk into a post-Christian era."

Ramel Cuenca, an American-Filipino married to the daughter of IMB missionaries to the Philippines, said: "When I was in high school, I was listening to the testimonies of a group of young missionaries from the United States at one of the meetings during a spiritual emphasis week. It was

then that I knew that God was calling me to international missions."

As the 55 were commissioned during the closing session of the California Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting, Southern Baptists' ethnic rainbow was clearly visible.

Near the end of his commissioning message, International Mission Board (IMB) President Jerry Rankin noted that African Americans, Korean-Americans, a Filipino-American, New Zealand-Americans, and British-Americans were among the appointees.

His observation echoed comments by California Baptist Executive Director Fermin A. Whittaker, who opened the commissioning service by noting his Panamanian background and thanking Southern Baptists for caring enough to send missionaries to his country.

National Baptist conventions around the world are joining Southern Baptists in sending missionaries cross-culturally, said Avery Willis, IMB senior vice president for overseas operations.



PRAYER OF DEDICATION — Milton Steck, an International Mission Board trustee from California, prepares to pray for 55 new overseas missionaries appointed Nov. 17 in Sacramento, Calif. (BP photo by Roy M. Burroughs)



A CHARGE TO KEEP — Difficult experiences missionaries encounter overseas often are the key to witnessing, International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin told 55 new Southern Baptist missionaries Nov. 17 in Sacramento, Calif. When nationals see missionaries practicing their faith amid difficult circumstances, it captures their attention and points them to God, he said. (BP photo by Roy M. Burroughs)

A hallmark of the new millennium will be the missionary work of non-Western Christians, he said. "Very soon there will be more missionaries from other countries than from the U.S., Canada, and Europe."

"It is going to take the whole body of Christ to reach the whole world for Christ. Around the world we are hearing, 'We were once the receiving church, but today we are the sending church.'"



## IMB trustees struggle with overseas budget needs

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (BP) — With new fields opening worldwide and record numbers of people hearing God's call to overseas missions, trustees of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB) wrestled Nov. 15-17 in Sacramento, Calif., with how to stretch limited financial resources far enough to cover all the needs.

In the end, they approved a record \$256.6 million budget but had to make a \$3 million special appropriation from board reserves for special nonrecurring projects — four million dollars less than what missionaries said they needed.

The budget included \$226.4 million for operating expenses, \$14.4 million for capital outlays, and \$811,885 for special contingencies. A \$15 million "challenge" budget also was approved and would become operative if Southern Baptist giving to the 1999 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering reaches its \$125 million goal. The offering last year raised slightly more than \$101 million.

While board officials say they desperately need the \$125 million goal to meet growing needs overseas, they told trustees they cannot automatically assume Southern Baptists will increase their Lottie Moon giving this year by the nearly 25% needed.

Trustees approved a change in the board's overseas capital fund, allowing 35% of the yearly allocation from that fund to be used to rent housing for missionaries. In the past, the fund could only be used for purchasing housing and automobiles. Board officials said the change was necessary because buying housing is often not possible or economically wise in some of the new areas around the world where board personnel are working.

Trustees also decided to delay until January action on a \$22.8 million request for expanding the Missionary Learning Center in Rockville, VA. The expansion is necessary because of the swelling numbers of new missionary candidates. The total number of IMB missionaries is expected to

top 5,000 by mid-2000. Five years ago, the total number hovered around 4,000.

About 18% of the 5,000 are appointed for two years, which creates a constant need for training replacements.

On Nov. 17, at the close of the meeting, the board appointed 55 new career and associate missionaries, bringing the total in that category to 295 — the second-highest number ever appointed in one year.

IMB President Jerry Rankin and other senior administrators told trustees that trying to balance rising needs overseas against known available financial resources had created one of the most difficult budgeting processes they had ever experienced.

Trustees passed a resolution asking IMB staff to move up to September from November the presentation of a "rough draft" of the 2001 budget so they would have longer to study that budget.



the  
**Unfinished  
Task**  
1999

**Loving the Lost**

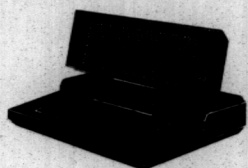
Matthew 28:19

**Week of Prayer for  
International Missions  
and  
International Mission Study**  
November 28-December 5, 1999

**Lottie Moon Christmas Offering**  
Offering goal: \$125 million



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Missrecord@aol.com**

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# Heroes for our generation

**T**he network television broadcast last week of the megahit movie of yesterday, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, in which indomitable archaeology professor Indiana Jones fights all manner of natural and man-made obstacles to recover the Ark of the Covenant, brought to mind the similarly-gallant efforts of our missionaries in many of the same places in which the film's scenes were set.

No, Southern Baptist missionaries aren't searching for the Ark or battling Nazis, but in many cases they are dodging bullets and living by their wits so they won't be deterred from their mission — to help bring a lost world to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

In this special Season of Prayer for International Missions, it is fitting to recognize those among us who literally risk everything to accomplish that mission. By God's grace, the vast majority of them return to us safe and sound after serving in some of the most spiritually-hostile places on the planet, but that's not always the case.

We all know the story of Lottie Moon, for whom the greatest missions offering in all of Christendom is named. She fought political turmoil and foreign invasions for 40 years to minister to the people of China.

Exhaustion and starvation claimed her.

We know the story of Bill Wallace, the missionary physician who was martyred after communists took over China, and Everly Hayes, his nurse who was detained by the communists and probably barely escaped martyrdom herself.

It's exceedingly easy for us in our day to think of people like them as members of a distant and honorable generation, far removed from us like the fictional protagonist in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

There are no Nazis to fight, the Berlin Wall has fallen, the Chinese have become our business partners, and the world is safe for democracy.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. There are missionaries today who continue to risk their lives for the cause of Christ.

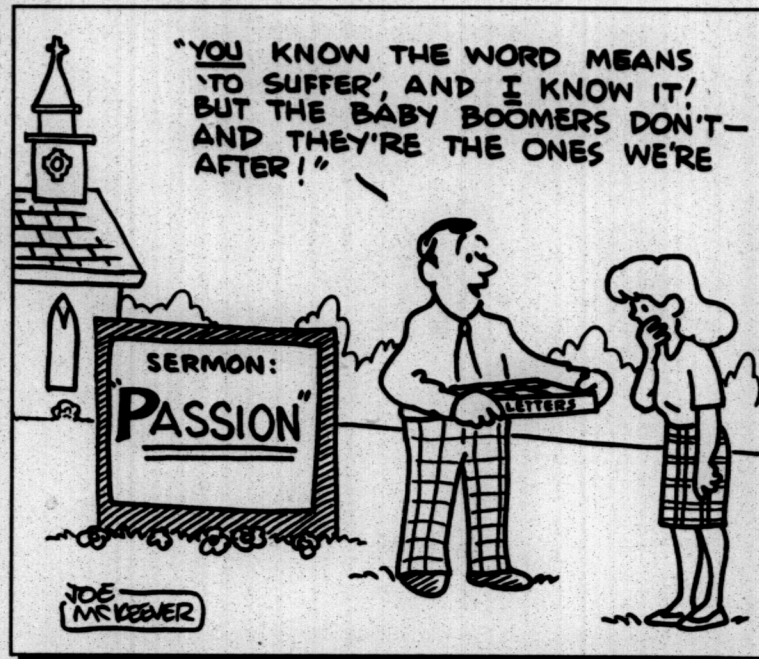
There was the young son of a missionary who was attacked by killer bees in the middle of a jungle, and died when he fell from a cliff while battling the bees for his life. There was the missionary who was murdered as he sat in his pickup truck in the front yard of his house, the victim of an apparent robbery.

There was the missionary's wife beaten to death by highway robbers, and the missionary couple surrounded by a violent mob after a traffic accident. There were (and are) the missionaries arrested and forced into squalid jails on trumped-up charges or no charges at all.

There is the missionary physician who, while attending his rounds in the African bush, has to wonder if the next tree across the road (not a road, but a pair of water-logged ruts) is a trap laid by a marauding band of murderers and robbers.

There are the missionary families separated by hundreds of miles while their small children attend boarding school in a place much safer than where their parents minister. There are the missionary families who must live together in heavily-guarded compounds — and sometimes even that is not enough to protect them.

They know that the next tragedy could befall them or a family member, yet they



continue to serve. They know that, despite the odds, they could indeed be the next name on the list of missionary martyrs.

Each one of them deserves our unceasing prayer support. Each one of them also deserves our financial support through sacrificial giving. Each one of them deserves our support in every other way we can muster.

During the Season of Prayer for International Missions, we should all be in prayer for what the Lord would have us do in support of these brave people.

In an era when we fill movie theaters in a frantic search of heroes, these are the people to whom we can pin our hopes and prayers of finally fulfilling our Lord's Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20), no matter the obstacles.

That is, after all, the greatest heroism of all.

## GUEST OPINION:



### *Does prayer make a difference?*

*By Wanda Lee, national president  
Woman's Missionary Union*

**D**o you believe that praying for Week of Prayer missionaries makes a difference?

Consider Cheryl Derbyshire, who serves in Thailand. She was featured in the 1998 Week of Prayer for International Missions emphasis. She credits that prayer effort on her behalf with bringing 500 people to her annual Christmas program. She wrote in the September 1999 issue of *Missions Mosaic* magazine, "I want your prayer warriors to know what they did for me and the work here in Thailand."

Cheryl's testimony is commonplace among missionaries. They always express appreciation for the prayer support of members of Woman's Missionary Union (WMU). A few years ago, an international missionary told the WMU executive board, "If WMU ever stops praying for missionaries, I'm coming home."

Praying for our missionaries and giving of our resources to aid in the work of overseas missions is at the heart of who we are in WMU. While it is a daily activity for most of our members, once a year we seek to draw the attention of our entire congregation to focus on international missions. We call it the Week of Prayer for International Missions and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

WMU's commitment to overseas missions began with their

love for Lottie Moon, who served as a Southern Baptist missionary to China 1873-1912. When WMU was founded in 1888, one of its first actions was to establish an offering goal of \$2000 to send two missionaries to help Lottie in China. Over \$3000 was received in that first-ever Christmas offering; enough to send three missionaries.

While money is vital for the ongoing work overseas, missionaries consistently say the thing they need most is prayer. Scripture supports their requests with the words of James: "The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective" (Ja. 5:16 NRSV).

Mildred McMurray wrote in her book, *Spiritual Life*

Development, "Informed women are inspired women who become influential Christians."

Missions Mosaic informs you about the needs of the unreached people groups in our world and those who are ministering among them. Praying "God bless the missionaries" once you are informed is not specific enough to open these dark places to the light of Jesus Christ. It will take informed, inspired praying to reach our world with the message of salvation.

As you participate in the Week of Prayer events and personal prayer times, pray consistently for those working among the unreached people groups? Ask God to grant them an abundance of patience and creativity as they try to establish a credible witness with their group. Ask God to protect them and support them in the difficult places.

Also pray for the people they are trying to reach. Ask God to create openness to the gospel in their hearts. Pray that the Bible and the "Jesus" film will be available in their language so they may know for themselves that God loves them and has a purpose for their lives.

Your informed prayers for missions could be the inspiration you need to give sacrificially this season.

*Lee, who resides in Georgia, is a registered nurse.*

## The Unfinished Task 1999

Week of Prayer for International Missions  
and  
International Mission Study  
November 28-December 5, 1999

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal \$125 million



# Commission: Sudan providing 'litmus test'

WASHINGTON (BP) — The persecution of Christians and others in Sudan is a "litmus test for us to speak out," the chairman of a U.S. commission on religious freedom overseas said at a recent Capitol Hill conference on the East African country.

About 200 people gathered in a Senate office building for a summit on a country that has been rated one of the world's worst examples of religious persecution in recent years. The meeting came as part of a growing effort to bring pressure by the United States and the international community on the Sudanese government at a critical time.

Two million people have died during the last decade in the civil war between the militant Islamic regime in Khartoum and the rebel forces of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army and as a result of war-related causes. The

slaughter livestock. The regime conducts bombing campaigns, with hospitals among the targets. At least 100,000 Sudanese



COUNTRY IN NEED — Though one worker describes the Arab Muslims of Sudan as the "poster children for lostness," Southern Baptists must remember that no country is closed to the activity of the Holy Spirit — and pray accordingly. (IMB photo)

regime supports raids by its troops of Christian and animist villages in the southern part of the country, but sometimes even of moderate Muslim areas.

The soldiers frequently kill men and kidnap women and children to take them back as slaves to the northern part of Sudan or another country. The troops also burn crops and

died of starvation last year as a result of the regime's intentional withholding of food aid to its people. From 4 to 5 million have had to flee their homes.

David Saperstein, chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, reminded the attendees the number of people killed in Rwanda, the Congo,

Kosovo, Bosnia, and East Timor is "almost dwarfed by" the two million killed in Sudan.

The U.S. "is beginning to stir, but we are compelled to act far more forcefully than we have done," said Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

"In World War II, so many people in Germany, even in the Allied countries, were able to say, 'We didn't know [about the Holocaust]. We didn't know.'"

"We know what is happening in Sudan. The world knows. There is no justification for the silence that has too long afflicted Sudan, and religious persecution is a major piece of it," Saperstein said.

The commission, which was established by last year's International Religious Freedom Act, has chosen Sudan as one of three countries it will focus on in its first year of work.

A critical way of influencing the situation in Sudan involves China, one of the other countries targeted by the commission, attendees at the Nov. 9 meeting were told. The only "significant oil field" China has found is in the Sudan, and the communist giant is "not going to let it go," said Dennis Bennett, founder of ViTrade.com and an expert on Sudan's economy.

The China National Petroleum Corp., China's state-owned oil company, is a heavy investor in an oil pipeline in Sudan completed in August. The pipeline will enable the previously debt-stricken Khartoum regime to finance its war against the people of Sudan, speakers said.

Talisman Energy, a Canadian oil company with many American investors, has provided funding, technology and personnel for the pipeline, Bennett said in material distributed at the conference.

Speakers called for a campaign seeking divestment from Talisman similar to the successful effort against companies in South Africa that helped bring an end to apartheid. Alan Hevesi, comptroller of New York City, said he manages \$92 billion in pension funds. "We want you to know we will be in

this fight with you," he said. The states of California, New Jersey, New York and Wisconsin are shareholders in Talisman.

Shannon Royce, legislative counsel for the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said the conference was a step in an effort "to try to make Americans, and particularly American Christians, aware that there truly is a crisis in Sudan."

"The first step of any legislative effort is to demonstrate a need. So we are raising awareness of a vital need."

Don Kammerdiener, executive vice president of the International Mission Board, and Royce attended the meeting.



MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS

THE  
SECOND  
FRONT PAGE

## Record

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Legislation has been introduced that would condemn the human rights violations in Sudan, increase pressure for the United Nations to act and reform relief efforts so assistance would reach the victims of the National Islamic Front.

The Sudan Peace Act is S. 1453 in the Senate and H.R. 2906 in the House of Representatives. Sen. Bill Frist, R-Tenn., is the chief Senate sponsor of the bill.



### Looking back

#### 10 years ago

Three Southern Baptist missionary families in El Salvador escape injury during widespread attacks by leftist rebels that killed 127 people. One missionary family, John and Peggy Alums and their two children, experience an especially close call.

#### 20 years ago

The 1979 Language Ministries Volunteer of the Year Award is presented to Wini Harris at the annual meeting of Jackson Association in Pascagoula. Harris is the director of project HOPE, a conversational English program at First Church, Pascagoula. She is a member of Woodhaven Church, Pascagoula.

#### 50 years ago

With the snowed-capped Monte Christo mountains as a backdrop, 250 Baptists gather to dedicate a special site for a new Southern Baptist assembly near Glorieta, New Mexico. Like Ridgecrest Assembly in North Carolina, the new western facility will be for all Southern Baptists.

WAITING TO DIE — An old man lies beside a house in a cemetery where Sufi Muslims perform dervish dances on Friday. Dying people come here for people of the area to care for them. Giving to the poor is one of the five pillars of Islam. (BP photo)

## LifeWay offers filtered Internet

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — To provide Internet access that families and churches can trust, LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention is offering filtered access to the World Wide Web via "LifeWayonline," effective Dec. 1.

LifeWay is partnering with Rated-G Online, an established Internet service provider with the latest generation of filtering system, Ted Warren, LifeWay executive vice president and chief operating officer, said.

Other sections of LifeWayonline include entertainment, weather, travel, sports, computing, education and business. Links to many popular sites are offered while filtering will assure that content delivered from the sites is family friendly, Warren said.

The cost of subscribing to LifeWayonline is \$19.95 per month, paid monthly. Subscribers may pay in advance for six months of service and receive a 10% discount for a monthly rate of \$17.95 or pay in advance for 12 months of service and receive a 20% discount and a monthly rate of \$15.95. The rate includes everything on the site and national dial-up service, including Canada. Local access is available in more than 1,000 U.S. cities. The rate also includes unlimited monthly access, four e-mail accounts, on-line shopping and classes, 5MG personal web space, high speed 56kbps access and technical support.

For information or to subscribe to LifeWayonline, call toll free at 1-888-454-5965, pick up a free installation CD at any LifeWay Christian Store or subscribe on-line at [www.lifewayonline.com](http://www.lifewayonline.com).



# First Church, Dallas, joining SBTC group

DALLAS (BP) — First Church, Dallas, voted Nov. 17 to loosen its nearly century-long relationship with the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) and join the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBTC) that claims to be more theologically conservative and professes closer ties to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

In a near-unanimous voice vote among the approximately 300 members in a church business session, the church elected to dually align with both conventions while continuing to monitor the activities

of a BGCT leadership that has been distancing the state convention from the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

The vote came after a presentation by Mac Brunson, First Baptist's senior pastor, in which he shared the findings and recommendations from a year-long study conducted by a six-member deacon committee.

The committee produced a sweeping 18-page report that contains 100 documented sources linking nearly 100 BGCT leaders to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) and Texas Baptists Committed, two organizations of Baptist moderates opposed to the SBC, and a host of theologically and politically liberal organizations also critical of the SBC's conservative stances on biblical and moral concerns.

Brunson and W.A. Criswell, First Baptist's pastor emeritus, said in a joint statement following the vote:

"It is apparent that the BGCT, under the elected leadership at its own admission is moving away from its historic relationship, commitment, and cooperation, with the Southern Baptist Convention.

"With absolutely no malice or criticism of our brothers and sisters in the BGCT, but with sad heads, we loosen our ties, but with great anticipation that God is about to do something new," Brunson and Criswell stated.

Some observers believe the decision by First Dallas to join the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention is but the first of dozens of churches expected to join the fledgling convention in the coming weeks.

The SBTC has grown from 130 to 260 member churches in just its first year with its staunch support of the SBC, its belief in the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture, and its zeal for evangelism, missions, and church planting.

"I've been impressed with their [the SBTC's] tremendous spirit," Brunson said. While not criticizing any individuals, he noted that the SBTC "has not been attacking the BGCT, yet the BGCT is constantly harping on anything the SBC does in order to find fault."

When asked if First Dallas would completely sever its ties with the BGCT and

align solely with the SBTC in the future, Brunson replied, "I think that's something the church will revisit in the next year."

Brunson said the action came after "much prayer and agony," but that the church felt "strongly about our commitment to the SBC and our historic commitment to evangelism, missions, and church planting."

Among the points raised in the deacon committee's report:

◆ The BGCT's dwindling enthusiasm for the Cooperative Program. While calling the Cooperative Program "the greatest voluntary funding program in the history of Christendom," the committee determined that BGCT leadership in recent years has "reduced not only the percentage amount of Cooperative Program money allocated to the Southern Baptist Convention but has changed the historical definition of the Cooperative Program itself."

◆ How those who hold a contrary view of biblical integrity, truth and cooperation over the past 20 years have created "other denominational entities that more nearly reflect their own diversity and higher critical views, and have, when in control, shifted the direction of some state conventions."

The deacons were particularly alarmed at the activity of Texas Baptists Committed, regarded by conservatives as the political arm of the CBF.

◆ How the BGCT includes the CBF in its "cooperative program" plan under the Option 2 budget.

As a result of the deacon committee's findings, the following recommendations were made:

◆ First Dallas will maintain a voice within the BGCT by continuing to send \$24,000 annually of its Cooperative Program gifts to the BGCT.

◆ All other Cooperative Program giving will be sent to the SBTC, designating \$24,000 to be retained by the SBTC, and the balance to be forwarded to the SBC.

◆ That \$24,000 heretofore sent through the BGCT and designated \$12,000 each to Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth and Criswell College in Dallas be sent directly to those institutions.

## Patterson Place celebrated



On hand for an Oct. 27 open house at the recently-completed Patterson Place adult lodge at Camp Garaywa in Clinton were (from left) Ashley McCaleb, former consultant in the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) Department; Jimmy McCaleb, consultant in the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Church Music Department; Trish Simmons, former WMU consultant; Kay Cassibry, WMU executive director; Kermit McGregor, pastor of First Church, Mendenhall, and president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention; and Debbie Sills, WMU consultant. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

## L. Munn has cancer surgery

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — Lacoste Munn has had 40 years of thrills working with his heroes and doing something he loves — teaching thousands of students New Testament and Greek at Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth.

Munn, who began teaching at Southwestern in 1959, decided to retire right before the beginning of the fall semester to care for his wife, Mary, who has cancer. This summer, the former distinguished professor of New Testament and Wesley Harrison Chair of New Testament also had cancer surgery. He said he is back to full strength and "all tests indicate the cancer has been completely removed."

## SBTC holds second annual convention in Dallas

DALLAS (ABP&BP) — Messengers to the second annual Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBTC) in Dallas approved a \$1.97 million budget that more than triples the amount of funds earmarked for missions and evangelism and more than doubles the amount tabbed for new church starts in the state. The SBTC provides 50% of its undesignated gifts to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

The conservative breakaway group from the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) held its constitutional convention last November in Houston. The group was formed, its leaders have said, to create a state convention that will walk in closer step with the Southern Baptist Convention and take more conservative stances on political and theological issues.

That distinction was highlighted both in speeches made and resolutions passed during the daylong meeting at Criswell College in Dallas, with about 500 registered messengers in attendance.

The most direct rejoinder to the BGCT came in the form of a resolution affirming the SBC's 1998 addition of an article on family to the denomination's "Baptist Faith and Message" doctrinal statement. A week before, messengers to the BGCT annual session in El Paso had overwhelmingly voted to endorse the 1963 doctrinal statement without the 1998 addition.

Richard Land, executive director of the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, drew repeated applause during his report, in which he charged the BGCT had abdicated its Baptist heritage.

"As a sixth-generation Texan, ... it is great to be with the real Texas Baptists," he said to applause. And as a member of the drafting committee of the SBC's article on family, "I appreciate your affirmation of the Apostle Paul and disavowal of those who reject" the SBC's statement, he added.

"There are those in Texas who have drawn a target on the agencies and persons of your Southern Baptist Convention,"

Land asserted. "I want you to know, ... we wear that target as a badge of honor."

Throughout the convention, speakers praised the new convention for its conservative doctrine.

Messengers heard from a variety of speakers during the day, including representatives of nine SBC agencies and institutions.

Guest speaker for the convention was evangelist Bailey Smith, who declared America today is the "Barabbas generation," exactly like the culture that chose the criminal Barabbas over Jesus.

America today lives with a generation of "sorry politicians," satanic power, senseless people, and "spineless preachers," he declared.

Smith railed both against President Bill Clinton and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, devoting a significant portion of his message to Clinton's confessed sexual relationship with a White House intern.

"We have a Baptist in the White House," he said. "Maybe one day we'll have a Christian."

He chastised Gingrich, also a Baptist, for not taking a strong

enough stand against Clinton. Gingrich "couldn't say anything because he was involved in a six-year affair" himself, Smith said.

"The problem in Washington, D.C., is most politicians are crooked," he said. "Crooked as opposed to straight. It's a crooked man who will ... vote for abortion, ... take prayer out of our schools ... stand behind an immoral president."

"The entertainment industry is a work of Satan," he declared. Likewise the feminist movement, he added. Smith said the reason some feminists have given for their activism is that they don't want any man taking advantage of them. He added that most feminists needn't worry about that. "Have you seen some of these women?" he asked.

As an example of a "man-made religion," Smith cited "Islamic fundamentalism." He admitted he is a Christian fundamentalist but drew a distinction between Christian and Islamic fundamentalists: "A fundamentalist Muslim will kill you, but a fundamentalist Christian will pray for you."



# Wedgwood officials dispute facts in e-mail

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) — While members of Wedgwood Church in Fort Worth, Texas, rejoice that more people didn't die in the Sept. 15 shooting rampage and report people are coming to faith as a result, not everything being reported about the tragedy is true.

One e-mail making the rounds, purporting to be written by a Wedgwood member, makes this claim that God miraculously intervened to save lives. "To enter the church, the gunman walked past our children's playground, which should have been full of kids, but for some reason every single children's and preschool class was running late. No one had made it to the playground yet."

Church leaders said in a written statement that description was only partly true. "The gunman entered through the south foyer doors," the church response explains. "This door is not by the playground. One can see the playground if they were at just the right angle, but the gunman was very intent on getting inside the building. It is true that the children were not outside because of delays."

The e-mail also says the bottom fell off the pipe bomb thrown by Larry Gene Ashbrook, causing it not to detonate. The bomb actually did explode, the church response states, but it exploded upward and not outward, with the shrapnel landing in the balcony.

Contrary to the e-mail, some kids did see wounded victims before they fled the building. Several teens mentioned seeing the body of Sydney Browning, director of the church's children's choir.

On the other hand, the e-mail does contain some information that is accurate and which church officials say is very uplifting:

♦ A United Methodist church in Fort Worth sent 15 people to Wedgwood the Sunday after the shooting to cover the church's childcare needs, so that no adults

would have to miss the service.

♦ A church in Tulsa, Okla., drove more than five hours so they could march around the Wedgwood Church and pray during its services that Sunday.

♦ A youth wounded while shielding a friend has scoliosis. The curvature in her spine may have caused the bullet to miss major organs as it passed through her body.

♦ A number of teenagers have professed faith in Christ at schools throughout Tarrant County since the shooting.

♦ Wedgwood has received strong support from Christians around the world. As of Oct.

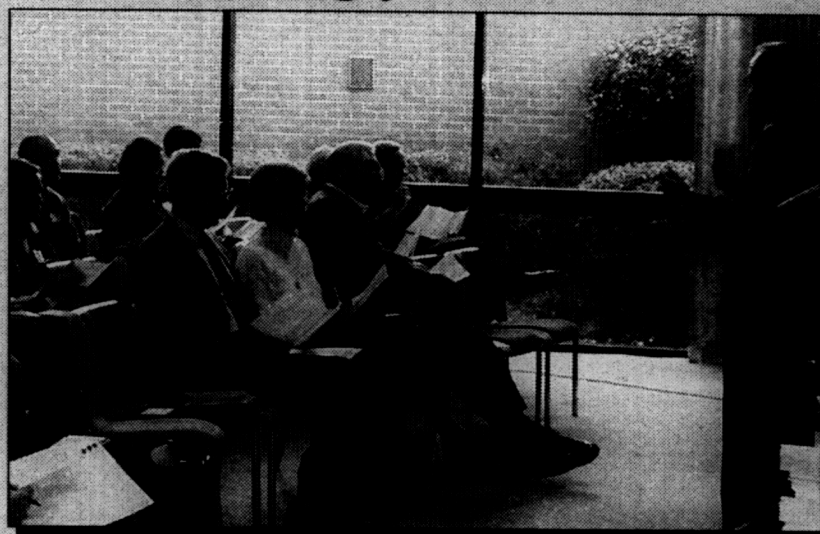
6, the church had received more than 13,000 e-mails, 20,000 cards and letters, hundreds of posters and banners and \$100,000 in donations. Those e-mails, cards, letters, posters and banners now line the hallways of the church.

There is even more going on at Wedgwood that the e-mail doesn't report, church officials say. "There is a deep sense that we have to wait on God right now," said Chris Shirley, minister of education and single adults. "None of us are absolutely sure where God is leading us right now, but we do know we want him to be the one leading us."

"What has emerged from the tragic shooting in our church on Sept. 15 is a clear message of hope and faith in our God, even in the darkest hours," said Wedgwood Pastor Al Meredith. "I called our people to 40 days of concerted prayer for spiritual awakening in our nation, Sept. 28-Nov. 7."

Shirley admits not all Wedgwood members are coping well. "There are some people who are still deeply hurting, people who when they come here, they don't feel absolutely secure. Everyone is going to take their own time to get through this in their own way," he said.

## Prepping for Ukraine



Gene Gillis (right), pastor of Cleary Church, Rankin Association, and volunteer coordinator for the Mississippi/Ukraine Partnership, leads a training session in the chapel of the Baptist Building in Jackson for people interested in going to Ukraine. On the front row at left are Thomas and June Nolen of Mantee, on-site coordinators for the Mississippi/Ukraine partnership. (Photo by Carl M. White)

## Edgemon to retire from LifeWay

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Roy T. Edgemon, leader of Southern Baptists' discipleship training program for 22 years, has announced his retirement as director of the discipleship and family group of LifeWay Christian Resources, effective April 1, 2000.

Edgemon joined the staff of the Sunday School Board (the



Edgemon

name was changed to LifeWay in 1998) on Jan. 1, 1978, as director of the church training department. The department

was enlarged and re-named discipleship and family development division in 1992. In 1998, the name was changed to discipleship and family group.

Gary Hauk, associate director of the discipleship and family group, will serve as interim director at Edgemon's retirement.

Hauk, 48, and a 22-year employee, has served in his present position since 1998. Earlier, he directed the discipleship and family magazine department. He also served as manager of the family enrichment section of the family ministry department and as consultant in senior adult ministry.

Edgemon said after retiring from LifeWay, he plans to continue serving as an interim pastor, writing, teaching, and speaking for LifeWay and other organizations.

## RECLAIM CHRISTMAS

With the arrival of December, Christmas cannot be far away. Some people LOVE Christmas, some people HATE Christmas, and a bunch of folks just seem to TOLERATE Christmas.

As you think about it, it's really strange, because most of the things that seem to weigh us down and attack our time and temperament, are actually good! We may take a trip to see parents or children, and that's good. We want to buy gifts to let those folks we love know how we feel about them. Then, at church, we have special programs that call for additional time and special rehearsals that involves a lot of hard work — so we can, as we say, "Keep Christ in Christmas!"

As you celebrate the arrival of the Son of God into this world, let me give you some practical, simple things that might aid in keeping life balanced and fill your heart with Christmas joy:

♦ **Relive the Real:** While some people would want to spend a great deal of time arguing whether or not Jesus was born on December 25, the fact is that God's Messiah did come into our world and his arrival was and is significant to Heaven and earth.

If you would like to relive Messiah's birth throughout the month, I would encourage you to



## Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

try this: Find a time each day and read the Biblical account of Jesus' coming. Primarily there are two chapters that describe the event — Matthew 2 and Luke 2.

From now till Christmas find you a quiet time in the day, maybe at the very beginning, and read these two chapters alternating one on one day and one on the next. If you do this from now till Christmas you will have read the Christmas story from these two accounts about 12-14 times.

Read it with your full attention. Several days you may want to read it from different translations. You will probably discover that though you are familiar with it, the story remains remarkably fresh day after day.

To enlarge on reliving the real Christmas, watch for times and opportunities to read the story to someone else. If at all possible, just make and take the time to read God's Christmas story to a child. If possible, visit

someone in the nursing home who may be losing their sight and unable to read. You may be amazed at how delighted they are to hear the story and equally amazed at how meaningful it is to you.

♦ **Resist the Wrong:** Now I'm not talking about resisting doing wicked, sinful things, but I am referring to being stretched-out, over-extended, and over-loaded with just doing and going — even if they are good things.

As I look at my own schedule with work, activities, speaking engagements, and over a dozen invitations to pageants and Christmas cantatas, I appreciate each and every activity, and will attend some and will miss others. I will not go to all for the same reason I do not eat chocolate pie the way I use to. It is not that I do not like chocolate pie, but I discovered my body needed others things beyond deserts. To paraphrase a scripture, "Man shall not live by chocolate pie alone."

At some point, if we are not careful, doing all the "good" things can become a "bad" thing.

— **Revitalize the Good:** Just one time during this season, try this: Do a real good deed for someone without them, or anyone else, knowing who did it.

In other words, carry out a secret act of kindness. Do not expect anything in return, do not plan to tell them later, do not boast to others, just do a kind deed and let God work out the particulars.

It could be that you do something thoughtful and nice for someone you know, or it may be someone that you only know the need that is there. You may want to do a secret good deed several times, but at least try it once!

♦ **In doing something good for someone out of simple generosity and pure motives, with no desire for acclaim or thought for reciprocation, you may discover some of Christmas.**

♦ **Rekindle the Relationship:** I mean by the relationship, THE relationship. If you do nothing else this Christmas season, do the most important thing — get reacquainted with the Christ of Glory!

He has been waiting and longing to meet with you. The faint knocking at your heart's door is probably him. Stop — welcome him in, and get ready to celebrate Christmas!



## JUST FOR THE RECORD



**First Church, Olive Branch,** held dedication services for new property on Aug. 29. The church recently purchased about four acres of land and some houses on lots adjacent to the church's property. The church plans to build a two-story facility that will function as an education building for preschool and youth activities. "Construction of the new education and multi-purpose facility should be complete in the next 24 to 30 months," said P. J. Scott, pastor.

**David Sills** will be the guest speaker at Terry Road Church, Jackson, Sunday morning, Dec. 5. Sills has served as missionary to Ecuador for over four years. He is still doing mission work as well as teaching.

The membership of **Peoples Church, Benton/Tippah Association**, announces the beginning of a new family life center. The new building will contain almost 5,000 square feet of educational space, new



1st-3rd grade TeamKids of Antioch Church, Columbus



Membership of Peoples Church, Benton/Tippah Association

**Eighth Annual Drive-Through Nativity** will be held at Algoma Church, Algoma, Dec. 10 and 11, from 6-9:30 p.m. For more information, contact the church at (662) 489-5846.

kitchen, and a full-size gym. Total completion date is set for fall of 2000. Glenn Johnson is pastor.

**GAs, 4th and 5th graders, of First Church, Yazoo City,** dressed as clowns for a project on missions. The GAs visited patients in the geriatric unit at Kings Daughters Hospital.



First Church, Yazoo City

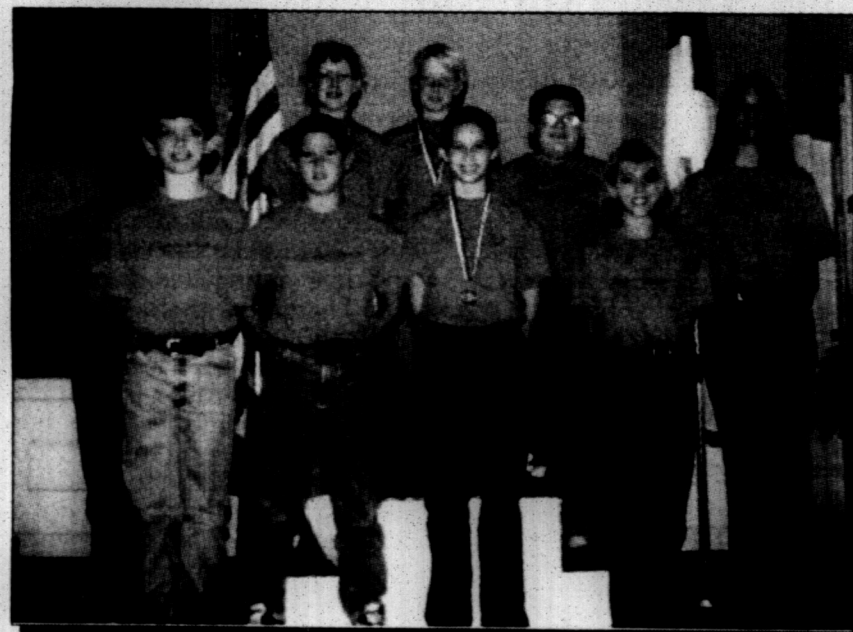
## Mabel R. Odle dies at age 91

Mabel Riley Odle, 91, died of cancer Nov. 19 in Hermitage, Tenn. Services were held Nov. 23 at First Church, Jackson.

A native of Kentucky, she had resided in Mississippi for 53 years prior to moving to Tennessee in 1995. She was a member of First Church, Jackson, for nearly 40 years.

Joe Odle, her deceased husband, was editor of The Baptist Record from 1959-1976. Survivors include daughter Sarah Maddox of Brentwood, Tenn., two grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

Memorials may be made to First Baptist Church, Jackson, or the Joe T. Odle Memorial Scholarship for Mississippi College through the Mississippi Baptist Foundation, P. O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone 292-3210, or toll-free 1-800-748-1651.



TeamKids of Antioch Church, Columbus

**Antioch Church, Columbus,** held a TeamKids recognition service on Oct. 3. During the service the TeamKids presented demonstrations of their Bible skills abilities which included memorization, application, and books of the Bible. The children and their leaders also demonstrated some of the teaching methodology of the program through the presentation of a skit. The TeamKids with the highest ranking, were presented medals by Kathy Crittenden, head coach. 1st-3rd graders pictured (front row, from left) are Jasmine Caruthers (bronze medal), Candace Holloway, Zachary King, and Jordan Britt (gold medal); (back row) Randy

Eddy, John Leonard, Caleb Eddy, Jennifer Crittenden (silver medal), Teresa Leonard, and Jeanie Eddy; 4th-6th graders, (front row) Matthew Walker, Josh Rivers, Nikki Crittenden (gold medal), and Whitney Nabors; (back row) Porsha Bailey, Leighanne Bley, Kyle Dawson, Chase Williams, and Aimee Nabors.

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## NAMES IN THE NEWS



**Derma Church, Derma**, ordained Earl Flemons on Nov. 7. Flemons is now the pastor of Victory Church, Bruce. Pictured (from left) are Chris Aldridge, pastor of Derma Church, and Flemons.

**Steve Pouncey** and his wife Debbie were recently honored with a 5th anniversary-pastor appreciation reception at Mt. Vernon Church, Newton. They were presented gifts and a money tree.



**The Pounceys**

## Biblical City set Dec. 9-11 in Calhoun City

Baptist churches throughout Calhoun County are gearing up for the annual Biblical City pageant in Calhoun City Dec. 9-11, when more than 50 scenes will authentically depict life in the time of Christ with hundreds of role-playing characters and live animals.

There is no admission charge for the Biblical City walking tour, which will open each night at 6 p.m. and close at 8:30 p.m. The tour route, which begins at Calhoun City High School, will be wheelchair-accessible and volunteers in golf carts will also provide transportation for the handicapped. Handicapped-accessible parking will be available.

Area Baptist churches participating in the event include First Church, Calhoun City; First Church, Bruce; Sabougla Church, Calhoun City; Bentley Church, Calhoun City; Pittsboro Church, Pittsboro; Pleasant Hill, Calhoun City; Derma Church, Derma; Bradford Chapel, Gore Springs; New Providence, Vardaman; and Bethany Church, Calhoun City.

For more information, contact the Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce at (601) 628-6690, or Pam McPhail at (601) 637-2257. Groups arriving by bus are asked to phone ahead to the Chamber of Commerce so that adequate parking can be reserved.

## Seminary employee caught engaging in politics

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) — A staff member at Southern Seminary in Louisville has acknowledged meeting with students in an effort to elect conservative officers at this year's Kentucky Baptist Convention (KBC).

A student who attended one of the meetings said Jerry Johnson claimed to be working on behalf of seminary President Albert Mohler. However, both Mohler and Johnson denied the president was directly involved.

"I have not been a part of endorsing any candidate for office in the Kentucky Baptist Convention," Mohler said.

Mohler said he hoped conservatives who support both the seminary and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) would be elected to state offices when the convention meets Nov. 16-17 in Covington. He denied, however, that the seminary is backing anyone. "Southern Seminary has not and does not endorse candidates for office," he said.

Southern is one of six seminaries owned and operated by the SBC.

Questions surfaced about the seminary attempting to influence leadership in the state convention, which is autonomous from the SBC, after an interoffice memo to selected students received wider circulation.

Johnson, the seminary's assistant director of development, held two meetings on campus with student pastors. A memo from Johnson's office said the purpose of the meetings was "to discuss electing [a] conservative KBC president."

A staff member in Johnson's office wrote and distributed the memo, on seminary letterhead. It invited selected students to "please meet with Jerry" in the seminary cafeteria on Nov. 3 or 4. "Specifically, our goal will be to elect a conservative president of the KBC," the memo said.

Mohler called the use of seminary letterhead "inadvertent" and said it "will not happen again." He said the memo "was intended as an internal document and should be seen as such."

Johnson called the memo "a mistake."

"It was not intended as any official memorandum from a seminary employee to students," he said. "I think the person who prepared the memo misunderstood I was asking for this contact on an informal, personal basis." Johnson is no newcomer to convention politics. He was chairman of Southern Seminary's board of trustees before enrolling as a doctor-of-philosophy student and going to work for the seminary. He made an immediate splash a decade ago, when, as a new, 26-year-old trustee, he accused then-President Roy Honeycutt of not believing the Bible.

A student who attended one of the recent meetings said, "The

seminary plans to use its influence to elect a conservative president in order to take back control of the convention." He said participants were "asked to use their influence to boost voter turnout in the upcoming election."

The student, who asked not to be identified, said Johnson told the group he "had been meeting with pastors and leaders all over the state."

"In fact, he stated that he had met with President Mohler and Dr. Danny Akin to discuss their target list of student pastors and leaders who would be sympathetic to their agenda."

Johnson responded that the student had "really bad information." He said his meeting with Mohler and Akin was to "discuss seminary policy on student absences" for those who wanted to attend the annual meeting. Akin is Southern's vice president for academic administration and dean of the school of theology.

Johnson distributed a list of "announced conservative candidates that support the direction of the Southern Baptist Convention" to students attending the two meetings on campus. They include presidential candidate Paul Badgett, pastor of First Church of Pikeville, and first vice presidential candidate Dan Ferguson, pastor of Second Church of Hopkinsville. Although the list had a blank beside second vice president, Johnson said in a phone interview that Tim Mathis, pastor of First Church of Danville, is the conservative candidate for that position.

None of the three candidates indicated any knowledge of Johnson's efforts to boost their candidacy.

### Michael's Watch



*But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." - Jude 1:9*

**Michael's Watch** is a support group whose sole purpose and mission is to offer emotional, mental, and spiritual support for those whose lives have been affected by family members or loved ones involved in the homosexual lifestyle.

**Michael's Watch Group** meets the 2nd and 4th Sunday each month at First Baptist Church in Louisville, Mississippi from 3:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Additional information may be obtained by calling **First Baptist Church in Louisville, Mississippi** at (662) 773-6246.

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## Revival dates

**Cash, Lena:** Dec. 5-8; Earl Hughes, Blue Ridge, Ga.; Betty Weaver, music; Pat McNair, pastor.

**Clear Branch, Wesson:** Dec. 17-18; 7 p.m. nightly; Jeff Spooner, Pensacola, Fla., and Chip Price, Jackson, speakers; Out Cry, a group from Mendenhall, will lead praise and worship. Wayne Moak, pastor.



## Fasting/Prayer event utilizes satellite, 'Net

HOUSTON (BP) — Several Southern Baptists leaders were among the international Fasting & Prayer Gathering '99's key speakers Nov. 11-13 in Houston's Astroarena. The sixth annual rally brought together prominent Christian leaders from a number of denominations and evangelistic groups to pray, read Scripture, and talk about pressing concerns, while fasting for 42 hours.

Co-sponsored by Campus Crusade for Christ and Mission America, the event was broadcast live each day via satellite and RealVideo on the Internet to churches and homes around the world, immediately connecting Christians in the Astroarena with Christians in nearly 40 nations. As of Nov. 13, organizers knew of 7,594 who had registered that they were participating in their homes, watching events in Houston live via the Internet. Thousands more participated in one of 1,362 registered church satellite broadcast locations and 805 home satellite sites.

This year's event also included a SleepFast specifically for teens. While more than 4,000 teens were packed into the Astroarena for an all-night prayer meeting, tens of thousands watched the activity live on the Internet or by satellite connections in their church fellowship halls or gyms, as well as homes. Church youth groups from every state and several countries had preregistered with rally organizers before Nov. 11.

Among other speakers during Fasting & Prayer '99 were Morris Chapman, Adrian Rogers, Bob Reccord, Bill McCartney, Kay Arthur, Dennis Rainey, Janet Parshall, John Ed Mathison, Evelyn Christenson, and students from both Wedgwood Church and Columbine High School. Steve Green was the featured musician.

A recording of the event is archived at [www.fasting-prayer.com](http://www.fasting-prayer.com).

# Gambling: a violation of Biblical principles

Second in a four-part series

## GAMBLING VIOLATES THE PRINCIPLE

### OF SPIRITUAL PRIORITIES

Gambling elevates materialistic gain to a dominant place in a person's life. Hence it runs counter to Jesus' insistence that we cannot at the same time love God and money (Matt. 6:24). Preoccupation with material gain ignores the biblical warnings against greed and avarice. The love of money becomes the source of many kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:10). Even the same-time gambler and the occasional bettor contribute to a pattern of greed and the exaltation of the false god of mammon. "Beware of covetousness," said Jesus, "for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). The insatiable desire for gain, all too common in modern American culture, often wrecks lives. The essence of life consists in the love of God and neighbor (Matt. 22:33-40), in friendships (John 15:13), in contentment and gratitude (Phil. 4:11), in peace (1 Cor. 14:33), and in enriching family relationships (Matt. 19:4-5).

Supporters of gambling may argue that gambling is recreation and entertainment. However, behind these arguments lies the economic self-interest of the gambling groups. Their main motive is materialistic gain, with little regard for moral and social consequences. The so-called economic benefits that allegedly follow a policy of legalized gambling come only to an infinitesimally few persons. A few commercial interests may profit from increased tourism related to gambling. Some low-income jobs may be created. But the costs for these are high. Gambling syndicates weave a web of influence and control over a city's life. Society as a whole actually suffers great losses in wrecked lives, misappropriated funds, wasted paychecks, and undermined family life.

The one clear instance of gambling in the Bible illustrates the compassionless nature of gambling. This illustration appears at a time of severe personal pain and loss. As Jesus hung dying on a cross, the Roman soldiers cared only for who would benefit from

his loss. The Bible tells us that they cast lots to see who would get his clothing (Matt. 27:35).

We must keep in mind that what these soldiers were doing was not the same as the activity of casting lots that was practiced by the Jews and the early Christians. According to the biblical accounts, the practice of casting lots was used to discern God's will in significant issues or courses of action (Num. 26:52-56, Act 1:26).

Two facts must be kept in mind when one considers the biblical use of "lots." First, when this method was used by God's people, the purpose was to determine God's will in a matter. Israel's religion, with its disdain for witchcraft, communication with the dead, astrology, and related magical arts, allowed no room for blind submission to fate or dependence upon chance. Second, the settlement of issues through recourse to lots was eventually discarded by the people of God. Matters thereafter were referred more directly to the Spirit of truth who guided the affairs of the churches.

## GAMBLING VIOLATES THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE

The central moral imperative of the Bible is love of God and love of neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40 and Mark 12:28-34). Love imposes strong demands upon us every day of our lives. Any tendency to limit love should be checked by Jesus' admonition for us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. The word "neighbor," of course, includes all the men and women and children in the entire human family. Love leads us to seek the welfare or interest of the other. It never allows us the luxury of self-interest to the exclusion of the other person's interest and needs (Phil. 2:3-4, Rom. 12:10, 13:10). Love is the royal law (James 2:8), the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2), and the principle by which our lives are to be regulated (Rom. 14:13-21).

Love refuses to engage in actions that mistreat or exploit others. Love results in a life of self-giving to others. What does gambling do, for example, to compassion and the concern for

others which is the foundation of Christian brotherhood? Love is surely violated when personal pleasure and profit are gained at another's pain and loss. The tenth commandment states, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's" (Ex. 20:17).

Love requires that we recognize and attempt to meet the needs of others. Gambling, with its exploitation of others, ignores the noble qualities of humanity, among which are reason, justice, compassion, and a sense of responsibility. Gambling weakens the foundations of a responsible community life. Love's work, on the other hand, is always to build up, never to tear down.

*Excerpted from the pamphlet, Biblical Insights on Gambling, may be purchased from The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, of the Southern Baptist Convention, at a cost of .22 cents each. Call (615) 244-2495 to order.*

## Gamblers' appeals to children criticized

WASHINGTON (BP) — Congress should investigate gambling industry attempts to market its business to children, including the use of slot machines with juvenile themes, a diverse coalition has written in a letter to both Senate and House of Representatives leaders.

The coalition of conservatives, academics, and consumer advocates cites recent news reports of slot machines with "child-enticing themes," such as Candyland, a board game for young children; the board game Monopoly; and the cartoon and television shows "The Pink Panther," "The Three Stooges," "South Park," "The Addams Family," and "I Dream of Jeannie."

The National Gambling Impact Study Commission (NGISC), which issued its report in June after two years of research mandated by Congress,

found as many as 20% of adolescents already may have gambling problems, the letter said. The NGISC also reported a Harvard Medical School study funded by the gambling industry estimated nearly eight million adolescents are problem or pathological gamblers, according to the letter. People who begin gambling as children are "predisposed to becoming

pathological gamblers," it said.

"These child-enticing slot machines are the latest innovation in a broader advertising and marketing campaign by casinos and the gambling industry to promote a 'family friendly' image, and, apparently, to bring children to the casinos, and thereby shape the next generation of gambling addicts," the letter said.

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## FAREWELL TO FRIEND

Editor:

The death of Jackie C. Hamilton, retired pastor, was reported recently in The Baptist Record. It is a rare edition that does not carry such a report. Those of us who have worked among Mississippi Baptists for several decades feel a sense of loss of a prayer partner and co-worker at each notice.

I was with Jackie in five churches where he pastored and he served two terms on the board of the Christian Action Commission. So little is known about the influence and strength of most of the men and women who serve on our boards who give so much time, energy, and expertise over and about their vocational responsibility. We must recognize that usually their service is a gift from the churches they represent but the stewardship of talent and energy is theirs, perhaps already stretched.

Jackie was a servant leader, an astute student of the Scripture, our Baptist heritage, and of the problems of our social structure. He was gifted with a keen intellect, good common sense, and discernment. He made valuable contributions as we designed policies and positions on critical issues. He had firm convictions but respected the opinions of others. He was a good team member, compassionate with special concern for "the least of these." He was a companionable and faithful friend.

Our world was made better and Heaven is brighter by Jackie Hamilton. Wherefore

seeing we are compassed about, let us continue in patience, looking to Jesus!

J. Clark Hensley,  
Clinton

*Editor's note: Hensley is executive director emeritus, of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission.*

## THANKS FOR EDITORIAL

Editor:

Thanks for your (editorial) in the November 18 issue of our Baptist Record. I really like "Who Forgets History is doomed to repeat it," by George Santayana. So sorry our schools have gotten away from teaching the children our American history. So sorry the churches, so many of them, have let ball games, other entertainment, and eating come into our church so strong until the young people, I am afraid, are thinking our worship place as a play place. Seems we have dropped way down from what America was founded for. Yes, it grieves me. I also liked Jerry Mixon's article. You all keep hammering away at us and maybe we will wake up someday.

Bonnie L. Cole  
Brookhaven

## TRIBUTE PLEASING

Editor:

I was pleased to read the tribute to Mackie Davis in the (Partnership insert of the) Nov. 18 issue of The Baptist Record.

Having served as his pastor for several years, I came to know his heart for missions. His commitment was as passionate as any missionary's I have ever served with in career missions. He was truly "one of a kind."

The progress of our Mississippi partnership with Honduras, Maryland/Delaware, and Ukraine is exciting indeed. Having just returned from a mission assignment with our International Mission Board in Antigua, Jane and I are encouraged by the response to this work. Surely our friend Mackie would be as well, in his own inimitable way.

Tom D. Sumrall  
Hattiesburg

## CLOSE DOOR GENTLY

Editor:

Life is always short at its best. We often meet at the crossroads where we find friends for a lifetime. During our many years at Van Winkle Church, Jackson, we have wonderful memories of our many good and precious friends; our wonderful pastors, musicians, and choirs that sing those great old hymns; prayers lifted; and God's Word preached and taught. Our wonderful time of worship there will cease. Those doors will be closed where we have worshipped so long, have prayed so long—where we have wept for victory for that lost friend or loved one.

Our precious church that we have loved so long will soon be closed. When you leave, will you please close the door gently?

Tom Walden  
Jackson

## CONCERNED ABOUT BFM

Editor:

I am concerned about an article that was in The Baptist Record on October 21. It was entitled "Blue-ribbon Committee set to study the Baptist Faith and Message (BFM)." I understand that this committee is to review the BFM and then bring any recommendation(s) to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting next June in Orlando. What I don't understand is, what is wrong with the BFM as it is now? Talking about chang-

ing the BFM reminds me of what I heard an Old Texan say about a certain group of people and I quote, "They're like a bunch of cockroaches: It's not what they steal and tote off, but it's what they fall into and mess up." We have too many things wrong in our world today that change will not help, unless it is a change toward our Saviour Jesus Christ.

I believe that the BFM comes close to being as good as it could be. I'm afraid that if we continue to change things we are headed for a time when pastors will e-mail their sermon to their church members who are sitting at home in their easy chairs and house robes and house slippers on Sunday morning reading the Sunday paper and all this person will have to do on Sunday morning is read the pastor's message and send his money on Monday to the church.

Please understand that I will be praying for this committee as they seek God's will.

Billy Floyd, pastor  
Good Hope Church, Batesville

## STUDY GOD'S WORD

Editor:

It is of the utmost importance to know what you believe and exactly who you believe in. We as God's people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge, but it ought not be. We have been given the divine, inspired Holy Word of God, that we may know as believers who and what we believe. Our very foundation as Christians is our belief in Jesus Christ, as the only Begotten of the Father, who died on the cross and was raised again to life on the third day. The question is, how intimately do we know our Lord and Savior Jesus beyond our foundational belief? Jesus said if we are his disciples we will continue in the Word and will do whatsoever he commands us.

God commands us in Deut. 4:2 not to add or take away from his word. By not studying to show ourselves approved, how much are we adding and taking away from God's Holy Word, trying to live our lives on our own knowledge and abilities?

Ramona Lynn Moore  
Magee



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.*

*Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.*

*Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)*

*Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.*

*Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.*

*No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.*

*When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.*

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## LIFE AND WORK

### Zacharias: persistent faithfulness

Luke 1:5-20, 68-69, 76

By Michael Jones

In today's fast-paced, technological world, the words "wait" and "patience" are not received with much enthusiasm. "We want what we want and we want it now," is an often spoken phrase. We want to punch a button on a computer and have our mail (e-mail) instantly received by the other person. Instead of waiting and saving money to buy an item we simply charge it so we can enjoy it now. Waiting in line at the grocery store is inconvenient and even angering.

This mindset of "no waiting" has also found its way into our

spiritual lives as well.

Just as we do not want to wait in lines or wait on mail, many times we find we do not want to wait on God. In our spiritual lives, waiting on God to answer a prayer or wait on his timing for something to happen, is often frustrating and discouraging.

As Christians, we need to realize God works according to his timing, and even during these times of waiting, God is still at work in our lives. He even allows us to grow in our time of patiently waiting.

**Wait faithfully (vv. 5-7).** An important lesson can be learned



Jones

from Zacharias and Elizabeth. That is, even when we must wait on something we deeply desire and pray for, we must remain faithful.

Scripture says these two faithful servants were "upright" and "blameless." They were "well along in years," well past child-bearing days, yet they remained faithful to God and his timing and will in their life.

How many Christians today need to "wait faithfully" on God, and not become so impatient that we give up and go our own way trying to make things happen? We need to learn the discipline of waiting on God and his timing and will for our life.

**Pray persistently (vv. 11-16).** We see in verses 8-10, Zacharias was continuing to "wait faithfully" and was chosen to enter the holy place and offer incense. This was a great honor present-

ed to Zacharias and would only happen once in a lifetime. It was here, while Zacharias continued to wait and serve, that his prayers were answered.

Zacharias no doubt had spent many years in prayer for a son. How many times have we prayed for a loved one to come to know Christ, or for God to work in our lives only to give up and forget about the request when it seemed it would not be answered? I am reminded of God's promise to his children in Matt. 7:7-11. Be persistent in your prayers and amazing things will happen just as in Zacharias' case.

**Work through doubt (vv. 18-20).** When the angel Gabriel revealed God's word to Zacharias, he had doubts and had to suffer negative consequences for that doubt. God has revealed his Word to us in the holy scriptures, and yet we find ourselves doubting many times.

We read passages like Matt. 7:7-11 and we doubt. We suffer negative consequences as well. Sometimes that means not being able to partake of the whole blessing God would like to share with us. When we doubt, we must work through it and return to his revelation, the Word, allowing our faith to mature.

**Celebrate God's faithfulness (vv. 68-69, 76).** After the birth of John the Baptist, we read in vv. 57-67 that Zacharias praised God for all he had done. We, too, need to celebrate God's faithfulness in fulfilling his promises to us. We are to continually praise God for his mighty works and for allowing us to be a part of his work.

Even in today's technologically advanced world, praise is still appropriate for God's children. Read Psalm 150.

Jones is associate pastor/youth minister at Monticello Church, Monticello.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### Live in light

1 John 1:1-2:2

By Carl M. White

It is generally accepted that the same John who wrote the Gospel of John also penned the three epistles known as 1, 2, and 3 John. Though he never fully identifies himself, it is believed that this is the son of Zebedee, the disciple of Jesus.

One of the ways biblical scholars establish common authorship is by internal evidence such as themes and word usage. For example, both 1 John and the Gospel of John refer to Christ as the "Word" and use the phrase "eternal life."

**Rejoicing in fellowship (1:1-4).** The result of the preaching of the Gospel is the conversion of men and women to Christ. Men

and women who have come to faith in Christ form a unique fraternity.

One of the joys of traveling to different parts of the world is meeting believers from other cultures. Though there is much that separates us, a common faith in the same Lord brings about a fellowship that is incomparable. The aged apostle John indicates that the presence of this fellowship brings him great joy, and should bring believers joy.

**Walking in the light (1:5-8).** One of the characteristics of this fellowship is the experience of what John calls "walking in the light."

There are several possible



White

meanings of this phrase. One could be enlightenment. Walking in the light means living with the conscious awareness of God's presence, guidance, and concern with your life. Knowing God's presence can make a difference in the face of difficulties.

Another possible meaning is to live life purely. Walking in the light is to walk in righteousness, not in the "darkness" of sin.

A third meaning could be power. John says "God is light." The presence of light is the presence of power. The light of the sun gives growth power to both the plant world and the human world. Light is the evidence of life. If you see a house in the night with lights on, it indicates someone is home.

This is certain, "walking in the light" is to be right with God, while "walking in dark-

ness" is to be in sin.

**Confessing our sins (1:9-10).** Since walking in the light is necessary for true fellowship with God and one another, we must have a way to deal with the sin problem of "walking in the darkness."

God dealt with the sin problem ultimately in Christ. Jesus took our sins on himself on the cross, freeing us from the penalty of sin.

Christians must deal with sin in the immediate sense. Though Christ died for my sins on the cross, I still have a sinful nature and sin. While ultimately this sin is paid for, the temporal result is a break in the fellowship with God and other believers. Thus, God invites us to "confess our sins."

There have always been some who would say, "since Jesus died for my sins on Calvary, I have no sin." This is a false teaching. Jesus took the ultimate penalty away, but the temporal reality remains.

Confession is how to deal with the immediate effect sin has on fellowship in a believer's life.

**Trusting our advocate (2:12).** If you are to rely on your own ability to be good to maintain your relationship with Christ and others, you will be disappointed. John makes it clear he does not want his brothers and sisters in Christ in sin. However, he assures them that through Christ, God is able to handle their lapses and failures. This is because of the completeness of Christ's work as a propitiation for our sins (Rom. 3:23; 1 John 4:10).

This word means in Christ's death on the cross, the demands of righteousness and justice are met. Thus, our record before God is clean.

The complete adequacy of Christ makes us free to enjoy the fellowship of believers that is part of his abundant plan for each of our lives.

White is a member of First Church, Clinton.

## FAMILY BIBLE SERIES

### Time of preparing

Matthew 3:1-8, 11-17

By Lynn Jones

I heard of a pastor who boasted to his congregation that all the time that he needed to prepare his sermon was the time that it took for him to walk the one block from the parsonage to the church building. After hearing him preach for a year, the church bought a new parsonage, ten miles outside town.

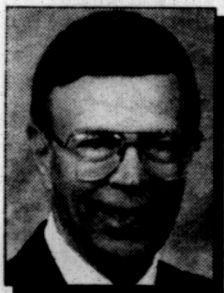
God has always valued preparation. He even sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

**Preparation (vv. 1-6).** John the Baptist began preaching in the wilderness region north of the Dead Sea. Matthew said that John's ministry was the

fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah. He was like a herald who went before a king preparing the way for the king's coming. His message called for repentance. As persons repented of their sins, they prepared a straight road over which the Messiah could come riding into their souls.

What kind of twists and turns or roadblocks do we throw up before Christ's entry into our lives? How easy is it for him to enter our souls?

The most striking thing about John's ministry was that he baptized people who confessed their sins. For this reason, he was called "the Baptist," or "the Baptizer." Previously, only pros-



Jones

elytes has been baptized. For proud Jews, submitting to John's baptism required humility.

**Warning (vv. 7-8).** When many of the religious leaders of the day came to observe his baptism, John likened them to snakes fleeing an advancing wildfire. John warned them that if they wanted to be baptized they must show evidence in their lives of genuine repentance.

A pastor called a man who had visited Sunday's worship service. The man's answering machine had a profane greeting. The pastor continued to show interest in the man until the man later came to accept Christ as Savior. On the Sunday that the man made his commitment to Christ, he said to his pastor, "Give me a call. There'll be a different message on the answering machine." Receiving Christ as Savior must affect

every area of our lives.

**Promise (vv. 11-12).** A spotlight does not exist to call attention to itself but to the object on which it is focused. John's life was a spotlight trained upon Jesus Christ. John consistently pointed beyond himself to Christ. John emphasized the superiority of Christ's baptism over his own. John baptized with water, but Jesus Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Water is but a symbol of new life; the Spirit really produces such a life. Christ will also baptize with fire. That baptism is defined in verse 12 as being the judgment that will come upon those who do not believe.

**Affirmation (vv. 13-17).** The account of John's ministry reaches a climax with Jesus coming to be baptized. This presented a problem to John. John's baptism was a symbol of repentance from sin, but John knew the sinless quality of Jesus' life. Jesus asked John to let him be baptized. Jesus

said, "It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."

The great act of righteousness that Jesus would accomplish in his life would be his death for sinners on the cross, his burial, and his resurrection. His baptism symbolized his future death, burial, and resurrection.

Here at the beginning of his public ministry he publicly committed himself to accomplishing that mission. The descent of the Spirit in the form of a dove and the voice of the Father from heaven affirmed Jesus in this great commitment.

Forty years ago this year I went forward in Plainview Baptist Church in west central Louisiana to make my public profession of faith in Jesus Christ. I thank God for what he did in my life that day and in all the days since. If you will come to him in repentance and faith, he will do his mighty work in you.

Jones is pastor of First Church, Booneville.



# THE VILLAGE VIEW



Ronny E. Robinson, Executive Director

P.O. Box 27  
Clinton, MS 39060-0027  
(601) 922-2242  
e-mail: bcv1@misnet.com

## Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of **The Village View** is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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#### YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you.  
(*I have sinned.*)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death.  
(*I repent.*)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you.  
(*I believe in Jesus.*)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him.  
(*I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.*)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

### Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx  
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SGK ITRF SYF ITFW  
NTQET SYF RANG AG  
MAAK MYADGK; RDET SR  
TFSY ITF NAYK, SGK YFE-  
EQBF QI, SGK UYQGM  
XAYIT XYDQI, RAJF ITQYI-  
WXAPK, RAJF RQLIW, SGK  
RAJF SG TDGKYFK.

JSYV XADY: INFGIW

Clue: J = M

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke Six: Forty-Four.

# NAMB's Ravi ready for Hindu controversy

ALPHARETTA, GA. (BP) — As a native of India and a former Hindu, N.S.R.K. Ravi is ideally suited to coordinate interfaith evangelism training on Hinduism for the North American Mission Board (NAMB) — and when a prayer guide for Hindus recently was released by the International Mission Board (IMB), he knew perhaps better than most what the response might be.

What the controversy has illustrated, Ravi said, is the growing dominance of Philosophical Hinduism on the worldwide stage — particularly its influence on western New Age philosophy. Under this paradigm, all paths to God are acceptable — except those that do not hold the same inclusive view.

"By traveling the country for five years I could not have raised this much awareness," said Ravi, an associate on NAMB's interfaith evangelism team. "God in his sovereign wisdom is going to do something good out of this. At least our people will be aware of the increasing Hindu population in the United States and their influence on society and religious belief, and be able to pray for them more effectively."

The IMB booklet that has been the target of so much criticism describes Hindus as "more than 900 million people lost in the hopeless darkness of Hinduism." It goes on to say: "Pray that Hindus, who celebrate the festival of lights (known as Divali), would become aware of the darkness in their hearts that no lamp can dispel."

Protests have since erupted in various cities, including one at Second Church of Houston and another in Atlanta. Also, several Hindu and Indian-American organizations have complained to government officials expressing outrage at the assertions.

The IMB has since issued a statement expressing regret about the reaction, while explaining its intent. "The language in the prayer guide was chosen to communicate to Southern Baptists, not Hindus," the statement said, "and the truths in it, as we understand them, are rooted in the Bible, the book we believe to be God's revealed Word."

"It is distressing to us that elements of the guide may have offended our Hindu neighbors and for that we are profoundly sorry. We understand that the good news of God's saving love in Jesus, the Savior, may be offensive to some but never was it our intent to express that love in an offensive way."

Ravi, who holds a Ph.D. in missions and theology, said part of the uproar is due to the multifaceted nature of Hinduism itself. It is based on a collection of sacred writings spanning a period of almost 2000 years.

While Popular Hinduism, for instance, includes the worship of as many as 330 million

different gods, the vocal opponents of the prayer guide have been adherents of Philosophical Hinduism. For them, Hinduism is a universal message for mankind, and their god at least in some sense is monotheistic — a pantheistic/New Age concept of god as the sum of all consciousness.

"I even had a conversation just an hour ago with a follower of Popular Hinduism, and he did not see [the prayer guide's assertions] as offensive at all," Ravi said. "He was basically saying everyone has a right to practice their own religion."

Adding to the response has been the growing political power of the Hindu influence worldwide, as well as the Hindus' sense of moral outrage at an American "Christian" culture that they see as anything but reflective of a high moral standard.

"The questions I'm getting are things like, 'What kind of moral authority do you have to say we are in the dark?'" Ravi said. His answers, of course, have centered on the fact that both the proclamation of an exclusive gospel and prayer are simply inseparable from Christian faith and practice.

"What they are saying is you should not proclaim the gospel to Hindus, and that's not true at all," Ravi said. "It is mandated from the Lord to proclaim the gospel and to pray, which is part of practicing the Christian faith."



**HINDUISM REVEALED** — As an interfaith evangelism associate for the North American Mission Board, N.S.R.K. Ravi coordinates training and materials relating to Hinduism. A native of India, Ravi accepted Christ as a teenager after experiencing disillusionment with Hindu teachings. Neighbors and family believed that his disability — brought on by polio at an early age — was a result of misdeeds in a former life. (BP photo)

Ravi initially was rejected by his family — made an outcast — because of his decision to accept Christ. He was from a high caste and a wealthy family, and Christians were automatically forced into the lowest of the castes.

After 17 years, his parents, who still live in India, also

became followers of Christ.

Ravi said he tries to use sensitive language when talking with Hindus so as not to alienate them.

"Like many religions, Hinduism has some spiritual truth — by natural revelation of God to every man as revealed in Psalm 19," Ravi said.



Ron Mumbower, Ph.D.  
Minister of Counseling  
First Church, Jackson

## LifeAnswers

*I have a friend who is considering a divorce and I'm the only person she's told. What should I do?*

You are her friend, not her lawyer or therapist. In your letter you referred to the many issues that she is facing. Allow your friend to list her options and help her determine which issues can and cannot be changed. Spend time in prayer with your friend. Read Scripture together — especially Jer. 29, Phil. 4, and Heb. 11-12. Read the passages that address divorce, such as 1 Cor. 7 and Matt. 5. Divorce is not God's best for any relationship. Marriage is a living testimony of God's love for his church, but you referred to the fact that she is being physically abused. She has a responsibility to protect the body God gave her. Your presence, encouragement, and love are essential in this process. Do not underestimate the impact you can make in your friend's life. You don't have to

have all the answers; you need to simply be there for her as a source of strength and support.

*Here come the holidays again, and my children want everything they see. How can I help them to be thankful for what they already have?*

Maybe this anonymous commentary will help.

I am thankful for:  
◆ the mess to clean after a party, because it means I am surrounded by friends.  
◆ the taxes I pay, because it means I'm employed.  
◆ the clothes that fit a little too snug, because it means I have enough to eat.  
◆ the shadow who watches me work, because it means I am out in the sunshine.  
◆ a lawn that needs mowing, windows that need cleaning, and gutters that need fixing, because it means I have a home.

◆ all the complaining I hear about our government, because it means we have freedom of speech.

◆ my huge heating bill, because it means I am warm.

◆ the lady behind me in church who sings off key, because it means I can hear.

◆ the piles of laundry and ironing because it means my loved ones are nearby.

◆ weariness and aching muscles at the end of the day, because it means I have been productive.

◆ the alarm that goes off in the early morning hours, because it means that I'm alive!

Kind of puts things in perspective, doesn't it? Children who learn the value of "no" learn that there are consequences for their actions and that there is a price to be paid for their material desires. This is discipline and respect, all tied into a great-looking package.

Send your counseling questions to LifeAnswers c/o The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Please be brief. Name is not required. Remember: in time of crisis, your pastor can make recommendations on your counseling needs.